

Rebuilding the broken walls of Zimbabwe with the Church, leadership and followership

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Biblically and historically, Christianity is meant to enlighten people, transform lives, and develop responsible and effective leaders and followers who influence life-building change across generations and borders. Somehow, even while churches mushroom everywhere, selfishness, irresponsible citizenship, moral decadence, systematic corruption, and related travails proliferate and are sinking Zimbabwe into monumental political, economic and social crises. Meanwhile, the holistic mission of the Church has been narrowed down to proclamation, while demonstration of the gospel has lost attention, and the integral mission has become socialised and secularised. As a result, Christian principles of leadership and followership, such as stewardship, servanthood, responsible citizenship and all-encompassing service delivery, have become correspondingly elusive. The ruling government of Zimbabwe has been militantly silencing dissenting voices and the nation has a dire need for a prophetic voice to speak about reformation. Meanwhile the Church is sheepish, divided, erratic, somewhat inaudible and this submission addresses that gap. Some Church members appear helpless and hopeless, while countless others are migrating to cool off in neighbouring countries, to seek greener pastures, political and socio-economic relief. Thus, many Zimbabweans – those who are scattered and those still in Zimbabwe – are in critical need of a great revival. By reflecting on the rebuilding of Jerusalem's broken walls by Nehemiah, and employing an in-depth analysis of available transformational leadership and Christian literature, this article calls for an inclusive, spiritual, strategic and integrally missionary revival, to achieve a revolutionary transformation of leadership, followership, and nation building.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: This article interfaces ecclesiology and transformational leadership with politics for inclusive transformation.

Keywords: crises; Church; revival; leadership; followership; integral mission; rebuilding; transformation.

Introduction

The predicament facing the Church and State attracts nostalgia in Zimbabwe, and across Africa. A number of scholars, such as Bosch (1999) and Pillay (2017), affirm that ecclesiology is biblically and historically transformational. Confirming their assertion, the Early Church, Medieval Church and Reformation Church professed and propelled inclusive transformation for the benefit of all people. The authority and basis of Christianity – the Bible – speaks through Matthew 5:13–16, by stating that believers should be the salt and light of the world, which means, metaphorically, that they should be good examples of purity and uphold the right standards for life, such as honesty, conscientiousness, morality and diligence in work, speech, conduct and thought, while influencing others to do the same.

Africa has been struggling with social, economic and political evils; yet, as Galal (2023), McClendon (2017) and Jenkins (2016) reveal, Christianity is regarded to be the main religion on the continent, and the majority of Africans are Christians. Considering that the Christian gospel is predominantly inclusive and transformational and fosters the Christ-like tenets of righteousness, stewardship, servanthood and responsible citizenship, it is paradoxical that most African nations are struggling with a variety of social, economic and political evils, such as substance abuse, corruption, vote-rigging and selfishness. In this context, the vehicle of transformation – the Church – is presently viewed as a cold, sleeping and dying giant. In attempts to revive her and effect the needful integral transformation in Zimbabwe, this article overviews Christianity, unpacks Zimbabwean crises, delineates *Missio Dei*, redefines the Church and anatomises *Missio Ecclesiae* in Africa. Subsequently, it overviews transformational leadership and followership, and explores a possible revival to curb the identified crises.

Reviewing the context: Unpacking the Zimbabwean crises

Zimbabwe was born on 17 April 1980 after a protracted war of independence. Before independence, the country was known as Southern Rhodesia, after Cecil John Rhodes, who had been the inspiration for Britain's colonising Pioneer Column into the territories now known as Zimbabwe. In 1965, White Rhodesians issued a Unilateral Declaration of Independence via Britain. The war of independence was fought against White Rhodesians by various nationalist groups, and it eventually resulted in a peace settlement being signed at the Lancaster House Conference in London in 1979. The conference led to elections in 1980, which were won by Robert Mugabe, who was eventually removed from power by a military-assisted coup in November 2017 (Asuelime 2018) after he had been in power for 37 years.

This context is imperative for comprehension of the matter under study (Dohn, Hansen & Klausen 2018:1–17). It forms the foundation for our review of the Zimbabwean situation, which is done to demonstrate the necessity of reviving the Church, transformational leadership and followership, and to transform Zimbabwe. The country has been facing an unsettling political and socio-economic catastrophe during the long reign of Mugabe, throughout the militarised rise of incumbent President Emerson Mnangagwa, who took power in November 2017, to today (Assubuji 2016; Cook 2017:1; Noko 2022; Tagwirei 2022:9–10). Zimbabwe remains riddled with political conflict and violence (Tarusarira 2014:93). Masunungure and Bratton (2018:1) comment that President Mnangagwa, when he entered power, promised reformist governance, but is yet to fulfil this promise. Consequently, the cost of living has risen, stimulating a massive exodus of millions of people, and depriving the economy of the highly skilled workers who are needed for industrial growth (Chitiyo et al. 2019:4). Since the main opposition leader, Nelson Chamisa, devoted himself to Christianity, engaged spiritualities, and churches have been appealing for free and fair elections in 2023, most Zimbabweans raised hope for political change in a troubled state (Chitumba 2023). However, as observed by Chan (2023), the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, which runs elections, promulgates

deliberate and targeted 'ineptitude' – illegalities and technicalities, plus bribes and threats of violence – which mark elections. These abuses were called out by observers, notably those of the Southern African Development Community led by former Zambian vice president, Dr Nevers Mumba, who faced sustained abuse for his findings and critical judgement that the election had not been free and fair. (n.p.)

Consequently, Zimbabwe experienced severe structural degeneration, immense deindustrialisation, and informalisation of its economy. As Kanyenze, Chitambara and Tyson (2017:6) observe, the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF) has also politicised, corrupted and weakened public institutions, scared potential investors away by continuous political instability, and instituted

policy inconsistencies that undermine business confidence. Muronzi (2022) notes that runs of the highest inflation rate in the world have caused living standards to plummet and the majority of citizens to fall into extreme poverty. I agree with Chitiyo et al. (2019:25) that the state of affairs in Zimbabwe has upset households, businesses, and the social fabric of the country. In this context, endemic and multifaceted corruption, criminality, substance abuse, and mental ill-health have increased, as citizens struggle to survive through unconventional means amid tragic hopelessness and helplessness. Bearing in mind that 85% of the Zimbabwean population profess to be Christian (Gaga, Masengwe & Dube 2023:69), the prevalence of political, social and economic ills is a paradox.

As Christians are expected to be the salt and light of the world (Mt 5:13–16), that they have little impact and influence on politics, economics and society is a cause for concern. Is the Church still in the world, yet not of the world (Jn 17:16–17)? It is public knowledge that the majority of incumbent leaders in high social, economic and political offices are Christians. For example, the ruling president, Mnangagwa, describes himself as a born-again Christian, in spite of his nickname:

[T]he Crocodile' because of his ruthlessness... who analysts judge more autocratic than his predecessor and lacking Mugabe's intellectual flair and ideological vision... Having presided over a collapsing economy marked by hyperinflation, unemployment, and corruption allegations. (AFP 2023:n.p)

Christian leaders, such as Uebert Angel (born Hubert Mudzanire), who was appointed by Mnangagwa to be ambassador-at-large to the Americas and Europe in 2021, purportedly to market Zimbabwe as 'open for business investments' (Murwira 2021), were recently exposed for being entangled in a fraudulent gold Mafia that also involves the president's family (Al Jazeera Investigative Unit 2023). Dube (2021) argues that, instead of playing a prophetic role, by speaking against evil and advancing transformational leadership and being as the salt and light of the world, a number of them, such as Prophet Walter Magaya, Bishop Nehemiah Mutendi, Apostle Andrew Wutaunashe, and White Garment Church leaders are, instead, regime enablers. Whether such leaders are co-opted or self-submit to court prophecy, they must confirm the need to revive and transform Zimbabwean Christianity, leadership and integral mission to attend all issues affecting the nation. If Christians and leaders can be revived and transformed, they should, together, be able to revive and transform Zimbabwe holistically. Before exploring the integral revival Zimbabwe needs, it is paramount to delineate the mission of God on earth (*Missio Dei*), redefine the Church in Zimbabwe, anatomise *Missio Ecclesiae* and overview transformational leadership and followership, as prerequisites to addressing Zimbabwean crises.

Delineating *Missio Dei*

Missio Dei is a Latin theological expression that means the mission of God. Scholars agree that *Missio Dei* is

predominantly a call for the Christian community to worship God as he is. It belongs to and serves graciously holistic purposes, for God to reconcile and redeem humanity with him, and with each other. Arthur (2009:2) says that the mission of God has an overarching purpose to see people living in communion with each other and with himself, and to bring about reconciliation in a broken cosmos. Thomas Schirrmacher, through his book, 'Missio Dei, God's missional nature', defines *Missio Dei* as the sending of Jesus Christ to the world by God and the Church to serve humanity through the Church, up to the end of time (2017:12). This explanation is based on John 17:18, which reads, 'As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world', and Mark 16:15, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation' (NIV).

Flett (n.d.:75–77) adds that *Missio Dei* is a divine engagement that calls the Church to participate in God's all-encompassing transformative mission in the world. Wright (2006:71) posits that *Missio Dei* demonstrates that salvation belongs to God who sits on the throne (with reference to Rv 7:10), and the Bible is principally about the life-bearing story of how God brought about his salvation for the whole cosmos. Mission belongs to God, and it is the prior reality out of which flows any mission we get involved in. Thus, in agreement with Harold (2019:3), 'the church is an instrument used by God to bring about well-being to the world. The bringing out of well-being calls for an understanding of the *Missio Dei* that includes justice and compassion'.

Thus, *Missio Dei* is not merely salvific, but comprehensively inclusive. Otiso (2022:25) studied the understanding of *Missio Dei* in the Global South and observes that *Missio Dei* is taken from its origination with God, and begins when a community of believers understand the work and call to the communion of, and with, the personage of the Trinity. Therefore, the mission of the Church can only be appropriately derived from the mission of God. As such, it is an extension of God through inclusive delivery of the gospel in correspondence with contextual circumstances. All in all, *Missio Dei* refers to the work of the Church as part of God's integral work in the world. Therefore, it is important to review the current state of the Church in Zimbabwe, to redefine it and observe how she can serve the mission of God effectively.

Towards redefining the Church in Zimbabwe

The Church in Zimbabwe is currently a mixed and confusing entity because of various images that are used to portray her. The term church is often assigned different meanings that depend on circumstantial references (cf. Howard 2017). In the Zimbabwean context, the term can refer to various perspectives, which equate the church to a workshop, market place, theatre, salvationist embassy, or a burial society.

The Church as a workshop

The majority of, if not all, Zimbabwean churches presently portray themselves as workshops where people's lives can be

fixed. Just as a car is brought to a workshop for mechanical work to diagnose and fix a problem at a price, a workshop church is where people are brought to be prophesied to and to have their problems addressed, for which they are charged through tithes, freewill offerings, seed, and other offerings. This approach is most popular in prophetic Pentecostalism, which promotes 'a serious overreliance on the prophets that turns them into mediators of God's blessings to their followers' (Magezi & Banda 2017:2). Citizens facing Zimbabwe's deep crises desperately crave solutions to their economic, social and political problems, and they are hoodwinked by prophetic voices who present themselves as super-spiritual authorities who believers must rely on, as they are mediators between believers and the Trinitarian God. As observed by Biri and Togarasei (2013:81), Zimbabwean tradition means they are accustomed to consulting soothsayers when they face crises in their lives. The Zimbabwean predicament has made many citizens so desperate that they seek divine intervention anywhere.

The idea of the Church as a workshop is not only a Pentecostal phenomenon, and scholars such as Bishau (2013:5) and Ramantswana (2019:1–2) report that even evangelical and mainline churches are now ministering healing, miracles and prosperity. Because the health delivery system in Zimbabwe has collapsed and there has been an escalation of complications and an increase in incurable illnesses such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and cancer, people suffering from various illnesses engage either traditional healers or Pentecostals to address their issues, as a way of 'protesting against the missionary church's failure to deal with their spiritual, social or family problems as reasons for their deviation' Rugwiji (2019:7). Therefore, it is important to redefine the Church in Zimbabwe.

The Church as a marketplace

The Church, especially the Pentecostal grouping, in Zimbabwe is also sometimes presented as a marketplace where miscellaneous ideas and goods are traded in cash and kind. This phenomenon is widely reflected through the commodification and commercialisation of the gospel, by which Pentecostals sell a range of items, such as anointing oils, car stickers, wristbands, one-on-one prophetic or healing consultations, and counselling meetings.

Drawing from his study of Zimbabwean neo-Pentecostalism, Mahohoma (2017) calls the Church 'God-Business', and explains how ecclesial leaders do business in the name of God by selling healing, miracles and blessings to poverty-stricken and desperate people.

According to Bishau's (2013) analysis, the prosperity gospel is identified by various descriptions, such as health and wealth gospel and prosperity theology. Bishau observes that all its features use very disturbing manipulative ecclesiology, literalistic interpretation of the Bible, careless theology, and

warped concept of miracles. This behaviour is what Marongwe and Maposa (2015) call Gospreneurship, which involves ecclesial leaders commercialising the gospel for personal enrichment. It is out of this kind of gospel that denominations such as the United Family International and Prophetic, Healing and Deliverance Ministries sell anointing oil, wristbands, car stickers, T-shirts, bandanas and DVDs (Rupapa & Shumba 2014; Sunday Mail 2014). Prophets Makandiwa and Magaya charge US\$1500 per person for 'solutions' (Chitemba & Ncube 2016), and various other churches engage in the business of trade.

In a vox pop with church goers and non-church goers, RelZim has established that some churches are recording brisk business as they sell church items that church goers scramble for at exorbitant prizes...selling church items from anointing oil, handkerchiefs, fruits, wrist bands, mugs, stickers, calendars among others. (Mawere 2014:n.p.)

The Church as a theatre

Increasing numbers of Church leaders in Zimbabwe are compounding the sacred with the profane, problematically talking while walking concurrently as God-men and comen, and becoming entangled with a heterogeneity of comical and controversial theatrics.

As Fröhlich (2019) reveals, the stories of Zimbabwean prophet, Walter Magaya, who claimed to have found cure for HIV and AIDS and cancer; Pastor Paul Sanyangore, who was televised 'talking to God on his phone' during one of his prophetic church services; and Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa, who asked all those who had belly fat problems to come to him for instant miracle weight loss, make the Church look like theatre. This appearance is compounded by the exposure of Angel by Al Jazeera (2023) as a member of Zimbabwe's Gold Mafia, which is a dirty gold-smuggling and money-laundering syndicate that includes Zimbabwe's president and other local and foreign fraudsters. Many other, similarly strange, comical and controversial issues have entangled Christian leaders in Zimbabwe. Prophet Talent Madungwe claims to frequent heaven to dine with God and angels (Nyakurerwa 2016). Prophet Passion Java stirred up hysterical controversy when he declared that he would commit suicide if the ruling president, Mnangagwa, would lose the 2023 elections (Bulawayo 24). Java is known in Zimbabwe for posting pranks on social media, flaunting expensive paraphernalia, being a court prophet for the ruling Zanu-PF party, using funny street language, sexual innuendo, and words in the Shona language as glossolalia in his church services in America. Comedy and controversy also involves one of the senior pastors of Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Forward in Faith, Apostle Christopher Kapandura, who is on record passionately delivering vulgar sermons (Sipeyiye & Mpofu 2021). Is the Church comedy theatre? This question deserves an answer, hence, the need to redefine the Church in Zimbabwe.

The Church as a salvationist embassy

While the Church carries a holistic mission, which, besides kerygma, leitourgia and koinonia, also involves a diaconal

mission to care for the needy – everyone, everything – and advocate for responsible citizenship. However, the Church turned passive and blind to political issues that bedevil the nation. It is notable that the evangelical, Pentecostal and indigenous Apostolic church in Zimbabwe is often muted by various causes, ranging from factionalism and political (ab)use (Chitando & Togarasei 2010:160) to fear, co-option (Dombo 2014:143) and diplomacy, which Togarasei (2018:33) describes as 'Salvationist, quietist, indifferent and unquestioning submission to authority'. Accordingly, believers, congregations, denominations, and their representative ecumenical bodies could be regarded as salvationist, because they are loud on issues of heavenly salvation in public, while speaking softly and quietly about national crises.

Some of the leaders of the so-called quiet churches have submitted to Zanu-PFism and have thereby compromised their prophetic voice. Well-known examples include Prophet Andrew Wutawunashe, a former Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe president and incumbent co-patron of Zimbabwe Indigenous Interdenominational Council of Churches, and Zimbabwe Christian Church (ZCC) leader Bishop Samuel Mutendi, who are well known Zanu-PF zealots and enablers (Baloyi 2022:57; Dube 2020:4; Musoni 2021:8).

The Church is supposed to assume a liberationist Kairos consciousness (Paradza 2019:1–2) to fulfil her diaconal role of caring for needy and oppressed people (Nemer 2016:27–28); however, the Church in Zimbabwe seems to be soft with social, economic and political issues that affect citizens. As this historical reflection outlines, she ought to be diagonally sensitive and engaging.

The Church as a burial society

Burial societies are indigenous organisations that provide financial and moral security, and presence to members in times of illness or bereavement. Semenya (2013:1) and Moyo (2020) explain that a burial society mobilises, organises, funds and helps subscribed members with cash and kind in times of difficulty, such as funerals and accidents. These societies fulfil an important role in the Zimbabwean context, where insurance companies that provide funeral cover are expensive and clients could lose when currencies devalue. Furthermore, funeral policies only cover the cost of the coffin, transport and an undertaker, while the Church in Zimbabwe goes an extra mile to mitigate grief and provide a resounding send-off for departed souls. While funeral policies lapse when policy owners default on their monthly premiums, the Church is generally gracious; hence, many people mistake the Church to be a burial society, as they find her inclusive and helpful in times of bereavement. That is commendable, as the Church should mourn with those who mourn and rejoice with those who rejoice (Rm 12:15), as part of diakonia. However, in view of her mission as holistic, she should balance her attention to include kerygma, leitourgia, and koinonia. When her role is redefined in that way, she will

demonstrate that she is much more than an undertaker, as she is also an upper-taker who points and leads people to God.

Redefining the Church in Zimbabwe

The Church is predominantly the redeemed congregation of God, whose messenger continually summons it to appear in the presence of God, who is always in its midst. While the Old Testament denotes the congregation of Jehovah (God), the New Testament refers it to the congregation of Jesus Christ (Lindsay 2000:19). Therefore, the Church is a community of God that believes that Abraham and his descendants (Israel) were part of the Adamic sin and death, which meant they could not fulfil their God-ordained redemptive role (Magezi & Magezi 2016:159–165). Thus, in the narrative of redemption, in concurrence with Deyoung and Gilbert (2011:26) and Van Aarde (2016:285–286, cf. 298–300), the Church is mandated holistically. In order to elaborate the redefined Church in Zimbabwe, anatomising *Missio Ecclesiae* matters, as it is holistic and includes diakonia, which connotes the bedrock of this article – reviving Christianity, leadership, and followership to curb Zimbabwean crises.

Anatomising *Missio Ecclesiae*

The term *Missio Ecclesiae* stands for the task of the Church. When God called Israel as the people of God, he had a purpose for them. Israel was to be ‘a light to the nations’ (Is 42:5–8). God calls the church, which is the new people of God, into being – as he did with Israel – in order to restore humanity to fellowship with the creator (Ac 1:8; Mt 28:18–20). The role and purpose of the church, therefore, is to facilitate the gathering of God’s people to worship, honour, and glorify God through Jesus Christ (Eph 3:21). As Nkansah-Obrempong says, the Church’s God-given agenda is not only spiritual, but extends to diakonia: ‘The church is God’s agent for bringing economic, political, spiritual, moral, and social transformation in society’ (2017:283). This statement is related to Mathew 5:13–16, which depicts disciples as the salt and light of the world. Being the salt and light of the world means that Christians should be active enough to influence, enlighten, transform, serve, and save their societies, for the glory of God. Thus, *Missio Ecclesiae* is revival, and transformative. In light of that realisation, mission promotes liberation theology, by speaking and acting for poor people, freeing those who are oppressed, and providing spiritual, social, political, and economic healing and deliverance in view of Luke 4:18, which states Jesus Christ’s words:

18. The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, To set the oppressed free. (NIV Online Bible Gateway: n.p)

19. to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour. (NIV)

It is with reference to this reflection that this article seeks to reignite the integral mission of the Church. She has been less audible than she should be on worsening political and economic crises, especially after Zimbabwe experienced a coup in 2017, and presidential elections that were unfree,

unfair, and hotly disputed in 2018 and 2023. Multiple social problems have seen an upsurge, such as substance abuse (Mandura 2023; Matutu & Mususa 2019), moral decadence (Moyo 2017), systemic corruption (Zinyama 2021), that also entangles Church leaders (Dube 2023), and a high crime rate (Chenjerai 2023; Mangwaya 2023). Zimbabwe is experiencing a renewed exodus of citizens who are trying to escape social and economic disintegration, as they flock to other countries in search of political and socio-economic relief (Mazingaizo 2023; Moyo 2019). Ordinary citizens who stay behind experience the consequences of the brain drain, while the divorce rate, mental ill-health, desperation, helplessness and hopelessness escalate. State leaders appear irresponsibly autocratic, self-serving, and violent, and cow dissenting voices into submission (Flanagan 2023). In this milieu, when the Church – which is supposed to be a voice of the voiceless – gives in to fear and takes a sheepish and quietist approach, revival becomes an urgent need. If the Church – the salt and light of the world (Mt 5:13–16) – loses her ‘saltiness’ and ‘lightness (activeness, influence and transformational power)’, and fails to change the sad stories and realities of people who are desperate for integral transformation, she becomes useless and irrelevant to society. Silence and inaction on prevailing political and socio-economic crises necessitates a revival. Once the Church is revived, she will rise and transform Christian and secular leadership and followership, and deliver Zimbabwe from the multi-layered crises. Before exploring the much-needed integral revival, the following section provides an overview of the kind of leadership and followership that can transform Zimbabwe.

Reimagining transformational leadership in Zimbabwe

Transformational leadership is a style of leading people and institutions. Generally, this type of leadership inspires leaders and followers to transcend their own interests to achieve shared institutional benefits. Nainggolan et al. (2022:1) base their reflections on Nehemiah, and explain that transformative leadership produces holistic positive change at every stage of activity. Alqatawenh (2018:18) says that transformational leadership idealises influence by stimulating, facilitating and enhancing collective awareness, enthusiasm, attention, involvement, innovation and cooperation, to realise positive change and eventually wins followers’ respect and support. It motivates subordinates to do their best and develop their skills, so as to deliver those subordinates to advanced intellectual and practical levels. This type of leadership is reminiscent of Nehemiah, whom the Bible presents as a transformational leader. Nehemiah was a strategic and transformational leader who is as characterised as being prayerful, visionary, inclusive, consultative, idealistic, influential, adaptable, focussed and sacrificial.

Leading through prayerfulness

Scholars such as Patton (2017) and Ogochi (2018:88) concur that the heart of Christian transformational leadership is

communication and engagement between leaders and God. This is evident in the biblical example of Nehemiah, who engaged with God for discernment, counsel, guidance, empowerment, and protection. God responds to intercessions, petitions, supplications and all kinds of prayers, as the Bible confirms in many references, such as Genesis 18:22–19:29; 2 Chronicles 7:13–14; Psalms 50:15; Mathew 7:7; Mark 11:24, John 14:13-14 and 1 John 5:15, Therefore, leaders who pray for their nations and engagements will be answered and transformed, and enabled to transform their constituencies and followers. That is why, when Nehemiah heard that the walls and gates of Jerusalem were broken down and ruined, leaving remnant of Israel that had survived exile in serious trouble and shame, without security and dignity, Nehemiah contemplated the problem, envisioned rebuilding the fallen state, fasted and interceded for God to forgive his people, and to graciously enable, empower and resource him to rebuild Jerusalem (Neh 1:1–11).

Leading through a vision

Nobody can be a transformational leader without vision. According to Patton (2017:2), a vision helps direct followers towards a common goal and empowers them with the knowledge that they form a vital component for serving to accomplish that goal. Because Nehemiah had his vision in mind, he was able to clearly communicate and propel it with others. If Nehemiah had had no vision, he would not have been able to stimulate and convince King Artaxerxes and the people he mobilised to rebuild the broken walls of Jerusalem. When he envisioned a transformed Jerusalem and communicated it with King Artaxerxes and all the stakeholders in Jerusalem, he inspired, challenged and won the hearts of authorities and followers to support him in realising the vision. Ogochi (2018:88) affirms this, by saying that vision directs followers towards a common goal and empowers them with knowledge about what and how they should contribute.

In the case of Zimbabwe, this is why Nyoni (2021) declares that,

as we rebuild Zimbabwe, we need a leader who is going to spearhead a clear vision. Firstly, the leader should appreciate and acknowledge the damage that has been done to the country. Nehemiah inspected Jerusalem to appreciate the magnitude of the damage and the cost (Nehemiah 2:11–14). Secondly, the leader must spell a clear vision. The leaders should create a great, clear, compelling, colourful, and creative picture of the future. (n.p.)

Leading through strategy

Strategic leadership encompasses the manner in which individuals and teams think, act, and influence other people in such a way that promotes sustainable competitive advantage for the organisation. In agreement with Muthuku (2020), one of the key roles of a strategic leader is to ensure that their organisation keeps on thriving for the long term, and that that success is sustainable. Strategy puts an

organisation, or nation at a point of competitive advantage. As such, Nehemiah exemplified strategic leadership as he rallied and capably led his team to great success of rebuilding the walls and repairing the gates of the city of Jerusalem as recorded in the Holy Bible (Neh 1–5). Nehemiah earnestly prayed and relied on God to help him succeed in his mission, thus paying great allegiance to his employer. It is such prayerfulness, wisdom, planning, engagement, resource mobilisation, diligence and sacrifice which enhanced Nehemiah's effectiveness that can save Zimbabwe from her crises if the Church, Christian and secular leadership and followership adopt the same strategies.

Leading with teamwork

Banso (2022) underscores that teamwork enhances collaboration, attracts diverse abilities, skills, and innovative ideas, builds morale, and increases productivity. It leads to greater effectiveness and efficiency. This is reflected in Joshua 23:10: 'Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight; your enemies shall fall by the sword before you'. The story of Nehemiah, similarly, inspires such teamwork, and Hunt (2023:32) declares that 'an important observation is that the city's walls were rebuilt in 52 days, while the oppression and destruction of the city had gone on for 141 years (Neh 6:15)'. Devising and enacting a plan, such as rebuilding Jerusalem's walls, required not only time, but also leadership and having the right people in the right positions (the right team) to accomplish the mission. Hunt (2023) adds that

after hearing from God, Nehemiah listened to the people, as together they set the course for how they would go about rebuilding the walls. He showed care for their situation and sought the people's input, buy-in, and ownership in establishing plans. He identified with the people, and where they had gifts to help accomplish the rebuilding project. He thought in terms of 'we' and 'us' (Neh. 2:17–18), and he came to understand and identify with 'the trouble we are in' (Neh. 2:17 ...). (p. 37)

In submitting to the sovereignty of God, Nehemiah connected with the people, tested his ideas, sought and cooperated with God's direction, and collaborated with a team that he had established. He recognised that he would not be able to accomplish the rebuilding process alone and that it would require a united team that shared the responsibility of rebuilding the broken walls of Jerusalem. It is as recommended for the Zimbabwean Church to pray for God to revive her leadership to rebuild Zimbabwe, as it was for Nehemiah to pray for Jerusalem.

Leading through idealised influence

Leading through idealised influence refers to leaders who stand out, speak up, diligently live and serve a clarified vision and mission, and exemplify conviction, competence, and ideal character. According to Mdletshe and Nzimakwe (2023:6), idealised influence refers to followers recognising, respecting, trusting, and supporting their leaders because of their leadership charisma, exemplary behaviour, conviction,

competence, and character. Ray (n.d.) defines idealised influence as collective transformation. Some of the key elements of idealised influence are modelling, providing meaning and purpose, creating and articulating values and instilling confidence, self-determination, self-esteem, and emotional control in followers. As explained by White (2023:10) and Ogochi (2018:89), Nehemiah exemplified idealistic influence by expressing his vision and inspiring and motivating his followers to participate and accomplish it together. Considering Dena's (2023:50) reflections on leadership as influence, such a revivalist demonstration of reconstruction is direly needed in Zimbabwe.

Leading through diligent stewardship

Leaders are stewards that serve humanity on behalf of God. Stewardship should be understood as entrustment (Attfield 2015; Chervonenko 2017:34). Stewards do not own what they are entrusted with, but they are accountable to the one who entrusted them with what they have. If leaders consider themselves as stewards of God's people and resources, they will consider themselves to be guardians and trustees of human, financial, material and immaterial (for example, time) resources that God avails at their disposal. As Tagwirei (2022:50–51) refers to harnessing available human, financial, material resources, and as Nehemiah demonstrated by rebuilding the broken walls of Jerusalem, it is recommendable for leaders to be diligent with what God avails to them. Leaders should understand that followers, finances, materials and time they have belong to and should be used for the advancement of a holistic *Missio Dei*. Thus, they should not squander resources, but develop it for sustainable use.

The irony of Zimbabwean leadership is that it is self-centred, instead of other-centred. Thus, transformational stewardship should become significant for them and they should use human, material and financial resources for *Missio Dei*. Because *Missio Dei* serves and saves lives holistically, also in the case of Zimbabwean crises, it requires attention and diligent transformational leadership that is based on stewardship that serves God by saving lives, praying, teaching and leading the Church, to foster responsible citizenship, resist selfishness and promote selflessness, unconditional love, generosity, hospitality, tolerance, peace-making, justice, and social cohesion. Tagwirei (2023) asserts that these values can collectively contribute to democratising and transforming Zimbabwe.

Managing conflict

Nainggolan et al. (2022:6) explain that managing conflict refers to 'the process of recognising and dealing with conflicts wisely, fairly, and efficiently with three forms of conflict management methods, namely conflict stimulation, conflict reduction and/or repression, and conflict resolution'. Managing conflict is one of the most important pillars of rebuilding a broken state. While the rebuilding of the walls and gates of Jerusalem by Nehemiah and his team was progressing, they faced disturbing opposition from the likes

of Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem (Neh 6:1–14). Remarkably, Nehemiah did not submit to their machinations by scheming, or fighting back. Nehemiah pursued his vision and mission, and inspired his team to focus on their work. Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem continued firing off threats and tempting Nehemiah and team to fight. However, Nehemiah kept still (as Ps 10:46 also encourages). As urged by James 4:7, Nehemiah resisted the devil and focussed on reconstructing the broken walls of Jerusalem until the work was completed and the opposing forces disappeared from sight. It is with reference to Nehemiah's example that we can reimagine transformational leadership and learn to be still when facing opposition. Being still is transformative, as it enables leaders to pray, think, discern strategies, and go on working successfully as God graces them. The Zimbabwean context is volatile, as explained above, and her politics, economy and societies are prone to violence. In view of an endless stream of disturbing stories that recount tragic political abductions, torture, economic subterfuge and social hostility, Zimbabwe is in dire need of transformational Christian and secular leaders who can employ Nehemiah's conflict management strategies, that of keeping still, resisting the devil, focussing on their vision and mission, and serving God and people.

Reimagining transformational followership in Zimbabwe

If followers are influenced by leaders who resemble Nehemiah and who are Christ-like and God-inspired, they are enlightened, transformed, empowered, and are led to rebuild their nation. Interfacing this with John 10:10, which reminds us that, in spite of the 'thief' (the devil, and, in this case, crises), Jesus Christ came to give holistic life. As he confirms through Luke 4:18, Jesus Christ modelled integral mission by proclaiming and demonstrating all-inclusive liberation for the needy and oppressed. Thus, when followership is transformational, followers will not turn a blind eye to the currently broken Zimbabwean socio-economic and political state. Imagine what would be possible if followers rallied behind well-meaning leaders and applied the gospel to the Zimbabwean context of darkness, hopelessness, and helplessness. In a metaphorical sense, we can compare the Zimbabwean situation to when Nehemiah saw Jerusalem ruined, the walls broken down and citizens scattered. Although Zimbabwe's physical walls are unbroken, her political, economic and social state is broken and Zimbabweans have scattered in search of greener pastures, political and socio-economic relief. Yet, the book of second Chronicles 7:14 speaks volumes about this situation: 'If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land' (NIV). If Christian followers revive and transform their citizenship and take up responsibility, they could intercede, speak out and stand up against political, economic and political ills, such as dictatorship, corruption and nepotism, and contribute to national healing and rebuilding.

Kritzinger (2007) warns against the privatisation of Christianity and argues that unless Christians, who make up the majority of national citizens, commit themselves to significant processes of people-centred development, instead of continuing with practice of their lukewarm and comfortable private Christianities, we should not be surprised if our predicament remains unchanged. The majority of Zimbabwean Church leaders and congregants publicly complain on various social media platforms that the Zanu-PF-led government has failed Zimbabwe, and that crises confronting the country are worsening. Arguably, the worsening of Zimbabwean crises confirms the need for leadership and followership to be revived and transformed enough to rebuild Zimbabwe, as Nehemiah and his followers did. Although Christians are heavenly-minded (Phlp 3: 20–21), their current presence on earth begets dual citizenship. Thus, while they should keep in mind that they should prioritise living with and for God, they should contemporaneously live as the salt and light of the world (Mt 5:13–16). As Matikiti (2009) and Kritzinger (2007:1673–1674) explain, the Church should engage with national affairs, in view of Christianity being the truth in the midst of error and lies, righteousness in the midst of a sea of unrighteousness, and a spirituality in the midst our crass materialistic tendencies. Then, when followers are transformed, their exclusivism will be replaced by lovely inclusivism and responsible citizenship.

While transformed followers observe 1 Timothy 2:1–3 and offer supplications, prayers and intercessions for those in authority, they should not misconstrue eschatology and misinterpret citizenship as only applying to heaven – they are also citizens of their nation. This means they must go beyond praying, and vote in elections, advance the prophetic voice of the Church, exemplify Christian living among those who are corrupt and evil and, eventually, achieve the transformation of many to the glory of God, and of Zimbabwe. If followers rise and rally behind leaders who are like Nehemiah, live as salt and light in the world, and act as hearers and doers (Ja 1:22–25) of the holistic gospel, they will, eventually, be able to address their crises with the gospel and rebuild the broken state of Zimbabwe together. As Tutu (2017) says, the best way to do politics is to uphold Christian principles of truthfulness, faithfulness and honesty, which will see many politicians turning over a new leaf, thereby instituting the desired peace and development.

Conclusion

This article engaged with the manifold Zimbabwean political and socio-economic crises in light of the exemplary transformational leadership of Nehemiah, who rose up, raised a team of followers, and rebuilt the broken walls of Jerusalem. Considering that the majority of Zimbabweans claim to be Christians, it should be possible for them to serve and save the nation from her current predicament, which is caused by irresponsible citizenship, self-serving leadership,

moral decadence, systematic corruption and related travails, which are ruining the beautiful landlocked nation politically, economically, and socially. In view of the volatile context of Zimbabwe, this article reimagines Zimbabwe and argues that, if Church leadership can be revived and transformed, and become other-centred, empowered and empowering through exemplifying intercessory prayer, transformative vision, strategy, teamwork, idealised influence, diligent stewardship and biblical conflict management, and their followers rally behind Nehemiah-kind of leaders, they can collectively advance Christ-like exemplariness, integral mission and responsible citizenship, and successfully rebuild the broken Zimbabwean state.

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